pressure/' The whole speech breathed a robust and well-grounded suspicion of Mussolini's good faith*

Lord Halifax was appointed to the Foreign Office,, but the Prime Minister conducted the negotiations which issued in an elaborate agreement embracing the Mediterranean, North-East Africa and the Middle East, signed on April 16, 1938. Our chief advantage was Italy's acceptance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, in particular the declaration that she had no territorial or political designs in Spain and would withdraw all troops after the war. Italy's principal gain was our conditional promise to recognize the conquest of Abyssinia. The treaty was not to come into operation till " a settlement of the Spanish question " was reached—a condition understood to imply a " substantial" but undefined reduction of the Italian forces in Spain. The agreement was welcomed in France, who desired to find a similar solution of her difficulties with Italy* and it was commended by the new Foreign Secretary as a contribution to general peace.

Chamberlain defended his handiwork in Parliament on May 2. " The situation was as bad as ever it had been, and it seemed to me that unless some further effort could be made it was in danger of rapidly becoming acute." His policy was peace and the restoration of confidence by removing danger-spots, grievances, differences and suspicions one by one. ** The signing of this agreement has already effected a radical change in the relations between our two countries : the clouds of mistrust and suspicion have been cleared away.** It was only to become operative when a settlement in Spain was reached, and we should then recognize the conquest of Abyssinia. " I believe that for Italy and ourselves this agree-ment marks the beginning of a new era. In

former days we had a close friendship with the old Italy. To-day there is a new Italy, an Italy which, under the stimulus of the personality of Signor Mussolini, is showing new vigour, in which there is apparent new vision and new efficiency in administration and in the measures they are taking to improve the conditions of their people. With the laying aside of temporary differences which this agreement brought about, I believe that we may look forward to a friendship with the new Italy as firmly based as that by which we were bound to the old." Such were the illusions of 1938. Chamberlain seemed incapable of understanding what sort of men the Dictators were.